

Justin Trudeau Is Facing a Carbon Tax Backlash. He's Not Alone.; Canada Letter

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Highlight: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has made carbon pricing a keystone of his political program for Canada, but critics are multiplying, at home and abroad

Body

Three years ago, Canada joined 194 other countries in Paris to announce a landmark agreement on climate change, now informally known by the French capital's name. This week began in Paris, however, with startlingly violent discord over fuel taxes stemming from that climate deal.

The protesters, clad in the yellow safety vests France requires motorists to carry, are the most visible and extreme example of a backlash against taxes intended to save the world from a carbon-induced climate disaster.

But they are far from unique in their opposition. Under President Trump, the United States has vowed to quit the Paris Agreement, and the country's deteriorating relationship with China has become a potential roadblock to global progress.

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In Canada, a meeting this week between the country's premiers and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was preceded by vocal opposition from the leaders of Ontario and Saskatchewan over plans to impose a federal carbon tax in their provinces.

And as the world's environment ministers meet this month in Poland for follow-up talks on the Paris climate accord, many of the signatories — Canada included — remain far off-course on the goals of the agreement.

As part of my reporting on the carbon challenges ahead for Mr. Trudeau, I went to Saskatchewan, the epicenter of carbon tax opposition in Canada.

During our meeting in Saskatchewan's legislative building, Scott Moe, the premier, repeatedly emphasized that despite his opposition to carbon pricing, the province isn't avoiding climate action. While the federal government and many environmentalists don't think its efforts are sufficient, no one is criticizing steps like replacing coal energy with natural gas, wind and solar power. Saskatchewan will also require companies that spew the most carbon to cut emissions by 5 to 15 percent.

Mr. Moe is not a climate change denier. But he is flatly dismissive of the large body of work by economists showing that carbon pricing is an effective tool. "I don't think it's fair to say, in any way, that it does work," he told me.

Several of the ranchers and farmers I met, as well as some in southeastern Saskatchewan's energy industry, went further, wondering aloud whether Canada should do anything at all. They argued that any action from a country that

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accounts for about 1.6 percent of global emissions verges on the symbolic when China produces about 30 percent of the world's carbon dioxide.

That case, however, ignores that China has already reached its carbon reduction commitment for 2020, a target many experts believe that Canada won't hit by the deadline.

Andrew Scheer, the federal Conservative leader, has become as focused on eliminating carbon pricing as Mr. Trudeau has on introducing it. And while Canada is unlikely to see anything like the "yellow vest" violence of France, it's highly likely that the debate over carbon pricing will figure prominently in next year's federal vote.

Read more:

Justin Trudeau's Carbon Tax Push Finds Critics on All Sides

'Yellow Vest' Protests Shake France. Here's the Lesson for Climate Change.

U.S.-China Friction Threatens to Undercut the Fight Against Climate Change

Uncomfortable Position

Canada has found itself caught in the middle of an evolving power play between the United States and China. On Saturday, Meng Wanzhou, the chief financial officer of the Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei, was arrested while changing planes in Vancouver for a flight to Mexico.

On Friday in a Vancouver courtroom, the fraud allegations by the United States against Ms. Meng began to emerge in what may be a long extradition hearing. (It was also disclosed that Ms. Meng owns two houses in Vancouver and spends two to three weeks there each year.)

The arrest has already provoked vitriol and fear in China toward both the United States and Canada. Ms. Meng is not just a top executive at a company that is a source of pride for China, she is also the daughter of Huawei's founder.

We have a team of reporters and editors around the world following the consequences of Ms. Meng's arrest. If the story has captured your interest, make The Times your destination for news and analysis on further developments.

Read more:

Huawei Executive Took Part in Sanctions Fraud, Prosecutors Say

Huawei Arrest Tests China's Leaders as Fear and Anger Grip Elite

Huawei Executive's Arrest Intensifies Trade War Fears

Trans Canada

—Plans by the Trump administration to lift the ban on oil exploration along the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge will only compound the problems that polar bears face because of climate change, a researcher at the University of Alberta said.

—Harry Leslie Smith, who split his time between Canada and Britain, became a man with a mission and an avid following late in life.

—Christine Girard became the first Canadian woman to win an Olympic medal in weight lifting. Six years passed, however, before she got the medal she deserved.

A native of Windsor, Ontario, Ian Austen was educated in Toronto, lives in Ottawa and has reported about Canada for The New York Times for the past 15 years. Follow him on Twitter at @ianrausten.

PHOTO: Pump jacks at work in the oil fields near Estevan, Saskatchewan. (PHOTOGRAPH BY Amber Bracken for The New York Times FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

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